

Nevada Strategic Planning for Statewide Interoperability

Focus Group 3

**Henderson, NV
June 28, 2005
Follow Up Report**



Executive Summary

The Henderson focus group session on June 28, 2005 provided valuable input from the state and local practitioner perspective for the development of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan. The focus group participants identified the following top three major initiatives to be considered during the upcoming strategic planning session in Las Vegas on September 14, 2005:

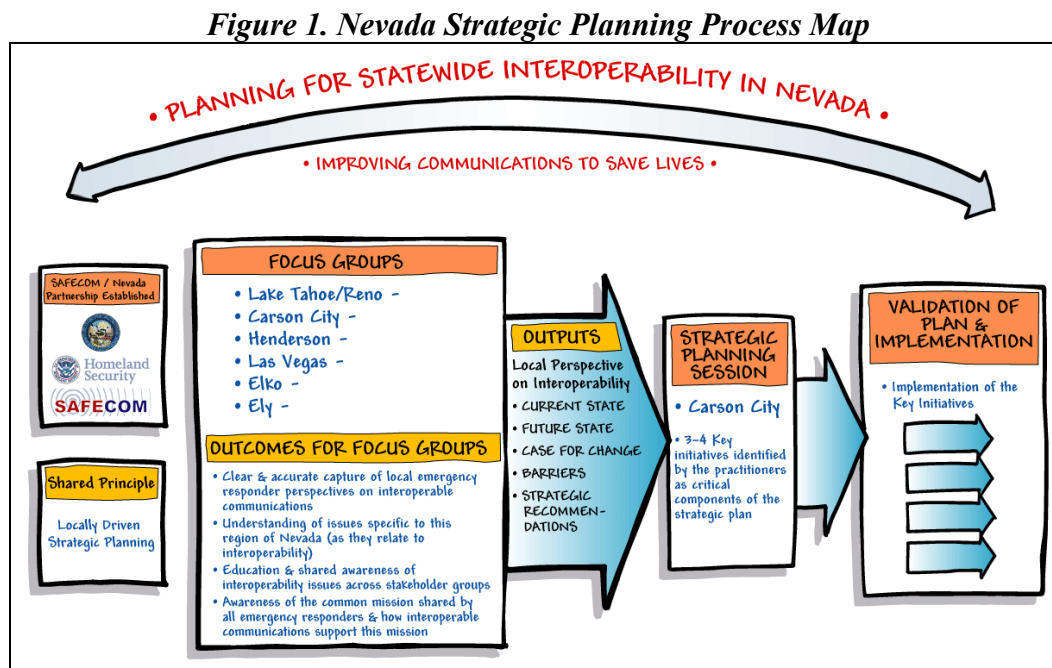
- (1) Establish an oversight consortium to determine a strategic plan for procedurally implementing interoperability with an established timeline
- (2) Create multiple regional operations centers within the state - Primary Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)
- (3) Establish real-time data sharing among first responders through a data warehouse

Introduction

The State of Nevada has established a partnership with the SAFECOM Program to conduct a pilot project that will lead to the development of a communications interoperability strategic plan that includes the input of public safety practitioners. SAFECOM's mission is to serve as the umbrella program within the federal government to help local, state, tribal and federal public safety agencies improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications. The involvement of local and statewide emergency responders is essential to the success of developing a Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan. The Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC) serves as the primary point of contact for these efforts.*

In order to develop a collaborative Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan, the State has asked SAFECOM to conduct six (6) regional focus group sessions, comprised mainly of informal and formal leaders from fire, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) departments. Additional representation includes public health, local and state agencies in order to accurately capture local perspectives on the state of interoperable communications in Nevada. In addition to the 6 focus group sessions, a strategic planning session will also be conducted to validate and build on the inputs from the focus groups.

The following graphic depicts the process by which SAFECOM will bring locally driven philosophy and strategic planning approach to the regional focus groups and strategic planning session.



* The members of the Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC) who participated in this focus group did so in their practitioner or individual agency role. They did not participate as members of the NCSC. No NCSC deliberations were undertaken, nor decisions made.

The outcomes of the focus group sessions are as follows:

- ☐ Clear and accurate capture of local emergency responder perspectives on interoperable communications
- ☐ Understanding of issues specific to this region of Nevada (as they relate to interoperability)
- ☐ Education and shared awareness of interoperability issues across stakeholder groups
- ☐ Awareness of the common mission shared by all emergency responders, saving lives, and how interoperable communications support this mission

Each focus group session is designed as a series of conversations centered on the following issues: interoperability (statewide and regional) as it relates to the current state, the envisioned future state, the case for why change needs to happen, the barriers to achieving the future state, and recommended strategies to achieve success.

Detailed Overview

Current State

The objective of the Current State conversation is to affirm the facts about current interoperability capabilities and needs in Nevada regarding response efforts spanning day-to-day operations up through catastrophic events.

The Henderson focus group identified the following Current State themes specific to communications interoperability in Nevada:

- Current state is much better than it was five years ago
 - For instance, Las Vegas Metro Police Department is communicating with the smaller law enforcement agencies in the area, police and fire agencies now have the technical means for communicating, and new personnel have broken down cultural barriers.
- The five agencies in the Department of Public Safety are all on the Nevada Shared Radio System (NSRS), but cannot talk to the local communities. There are six other state agencies who cannot talk to NSRS
- Communications is poor due to a current lack of adequate funding, lack of awareness among state administrators as to the importance of public safety interoperability, and Nevada politics



- Smaller and rural areas have difficulties qualifying for grants because they cannot come up with the matching funds
- The Homeland Security Commission has communications interoperability as a high priority and is developing a draft plan; the Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC) exists and is managing a migration for all radio systems to the Core Four Plan
- Nevada does not have a global plan for interoperability
- Technological capabilities exist between police, fire, and medical in the Clark County area, but there is a lack of policies and procedures for many communities
 - For instance:
 - North Las Vegas and Henderson can patch through dispatcher initiated channels
 - Las Vegas Metro to North Las Vegas have patrol to patrol capability
- From a data equipment standpoint, North Las Vegas police has the ability to share data to other police through T1 and wireless, but cannot talk to fire
- The technology is in place for common channels and for setting up communications patches, but there is a lack of awareness among the first responders on the street about how to operate these channels
- The participants were not aware of any interoperable radio communications with local casinos, but casino security officers and police chiefs have initiated a dialogue through regular meetings

Future State

The objective of the Future State conversation is to describe the desired future regarding communications among emergency responders in Nevada.

The Henderson focus group highlighted the following elements of the Future State of communications interoperability in Nevada:

- Every first responder in the valley can communicate with any first responder – Command and Tactical communications
- The use of data infrastructure has been expanded to the entire region in the case of emergencies and for public services, and there is statewide first responder access and awareness of this capability
 - For instance, the call down phone system has been expanded to the entire region and first responders are aware of this capability
- Nevada has the tools and resources available to share information and to create incident response strategies in real-time, including a statewide plan that defines protocols for who to contact in a state of emergency



- Everyone is informed about and using the Core Four System
- Alternate, interagency, and regional PSAPs are established
- Nevada has awareness and communications about incident specific plans and procedures for communities and casinos
- Parallel systems for emergency responders in the event of catastrophic system failures
- An interoperability team or point of contact has the authority to set the strategy, goals, and objectives for the state information sharing. In order for this model to be effective:
 - Governmental policy/decision makers have relinquished some control
 - First responders have incident experience and familiarity
- There are no proprietary barriers getting in the way of information sharing
- The public safety community has quicker access to usable information (such as GIS) at incident scenes and can get real-time information to incident commanders and decision-makers on the scene
- Data interoperability exists statewide to establish 24-7 information sharing
 - There is a data consortium to own the data with support staff and inter-local agreements in place
 - Web-based capabilities link dissimilar systems



Case for Change

The objective of the Case for Change conversation is to discuss the consequences and implications if changes to Nevada's state of interoperable communications do not occur in addition to the opportunities that may be missed by not changing. The Case for Change statements should appeal to the emotions of individuals and result in action.

The Henderson focus group identified the following elements as part of making a Case for Change:

- The inability to communicate was one of the major factors in 9/11
- Creating a robust interoperable system for first responders will:
 - Increase effectiveness during daily events
 - Reduce risks
 - Build on the work done so far
 - Save and minimize the loss of life property and money
 - Combine resources to capitalize on current investments
 - Eliminate fear or uncertainty that damages or hurts Nevada's economic well-being

Barriers

The purpose of the Barriers conversation is to identify factors hindering the effort to achieve the Future State.

The Henderson participants identified the following barriers:

- Personnel in the political or decision making positions do not want to relinquish their powers or authority
- The public and the legislators have become comfortable, shifted priorities, and forgotten 9/11
- False sense of security as a result of billions of dollars already spent
- Technology has been purchased but many practitioners still cannot talk to each other
- Federal funds and money are not always the answer, rather there is a need for training, committee, and procedures
- Information/training does not always get pushed down to the line responders
- Disparate systems in different facilities
- The Federal government sets up competing funding streams that are fragmented

Strategic Recommendations

The purpose of the Strategic Recommendations conversation is to identify the fundamental strategic initiatives essential to reach the desired future state, including the completion of the statewide plan and identification of the most important initiatives the state can undertake in the short term.

The Henderson focus group participants identified the following top three (3) critical initiatives to achieve communications interoperability statewide:

- (1) Establish an oversight consortium to determine a strategic plan for procedurally implementing interoperability with an established timeline
- (2) Create multiple regional operations centers within the state - PSAPs
- (3) Establish real-time data sharing among first responders through a data warehouse

Next Steps

The outcomes from the 6 regional focus group sessions will drive the upcoming strategic planning session. The key initiatives identified by practitioners across the state will serve as the documented view of the user community detailing their perspective on efforts that will most improve interoperable communications in the State of Nevada. The strategic planning session is scheduled to take place in Las Vegas, Nevada on September 14, 2005.

The SAFECOM/Nevada Partnership is committed to maintaining communications with the participants of each focus group as the planning for statewide interoperability in Nevada progresses. This report details the results of the Henderson focus group meeting and was distributed to the participants on Thursday, July 07, 2005 (a list of focus group

participants is included as Appendix A). In addition, the results of the conversations with all 6 focus groups will be made available to all participants in late July. Immediate actions participants committed to based on their participation in the focus group include:

- Share information with association members about the work accomplished in the focus group
- Pass on the information to their supervisors
- Communicate to others about this meeting

Appendix A

Participants in the June 28, 2005 focus group meeting, in Nevada's Henderson Area on Nevada's Strategic Planning for Statewide Communications Interoperability:

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Appendix B

Graphical Representation of the Nevada Strategic Planning Process

